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An Overview of Research on Political Attitudes in Croatia

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Abstract

The article presents an overview of research on political attitudes in Croatia since the beginning of 1990s. There is a considerable number of works investigating political attitudes, written mainly by political scientists, psychologists and sociologists. Admittedly, many of these works are available only in Croatian. The significance and diversity of topics covered by various authors indicate the necessity of further efforts in synthesising this substantial body of interdisciplinary scientific knowledge. This article is a step in that direction.

Keywords: political attitudes, Croatia

1. Introduction

There has been a considerable body of research on political attitudes in Croatia in the last two decades. Political scientists, psychologists, and sociologists have been particularly active in this research domain, with occasional contributions from other disciplines, reflecting an interdisciplinary character of the problem area. However, many of these works have been scattered across various publications in Croatian language, which makes them less accessible to international audience.

The total number of contributions is too huge to be reviewed with limited resources that were available on this occasion. Therefore an informative overview is provided, rather than a systematic, critical review. The overview is non-exhaustive – the claim that either all the relevant authors or works have been covered would be an overstatement. A more comprehensive review remains to be done.

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Works compiled here are presented in alphabetical order of author's surname. If not explicitly stated otherwise, the works have been written in Croatian.

2. Overview of Research on Political Attitudes in Croatia

Sociologist **Dragan Bagić**, one of the contributors to this volume, has often been writing about political attitudes in Croatia. Bagić analysed, among others, national-authoritarian political orientations in Zagreb students population (Živković and Bagić, 2002), the influence of refusals on the validity of pre-election telephone surveys (2004), costs and benefits as a factor in citizens' support to the Croatian accession to the European Union (Bagić and Šalinović, 2006, in English), social cleavages and party preferences (2007), as well as the methodology of exit polls (Lamza Posavec and Bagić, 2008; Bagić and Lamza Posavec, 2008). He also edited a volume on political socialisation of Croatian high school students (2011).

Political psychologist **Nebojša Blanuša**, another contributor to this volume, has been investigating conspiracy theories (2010, 2011a, 2011b). The first two of these works are available in English. Blanuša also writes about euroscepticism in Croatia (2011c, 2011d). Furthermore, he is interested in socio-political expectations (2002), historical consciousness (2005, in English), fears and hopes (Blanuša and Šiber, 2008, 2011) of the young people. Opinion leaders (Šiber and Blanuša, 2011) and emotional structure of attitudes toward political party leaders (2003) are additional areas of his research interests.

Psychologist **Josip Burušić** investigated the influence of exposure to television on the perception of political space (Rihtar, Milas and Burušić, 2000), ideological and socio-demographic profiles of Croatian voters (Milas and Burušić, 2004), stability of national pride (Ferić and Burušić, 2004), desirable characteristics of politicians (2007), as well as the predictive value of personal and national well-being in explaining attitudes of Croatian citizens toward the accession to NATO and the European Union (Babarović, Čilić Burušić and Burušić, 2011, in English).

Political scientist **Goran Čular** is primarily concerned with Croatian political parties. However some of his works include considerations of political attitudes. Notable in this regard is his discussion of the concept of left and right in empirical political science (1999). Čular is also a co-author of a chapter on Croatia (Henjak, Zakošek and Čular, 2013, in English) in the *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*.

Sociologist **Benjamin Čulig** explored factorial structure of political attitudes among the Croatian population (2004, 2005a), as well as the socio-demographic profiles of the attitude-holders (2005b). He also investigated the attitudes of Croatian citizens towards Croatia's membership in the European Union (Čulig, Kufrin and Landripet, 2007).

Psychologist **Ivana Ferić**, yet another contributor to this volume, investigated personal values as determinants of dominant political preferences (2008), as well as the role of moral emotions in voters' polarisation (Rihtar and Ferić, 2008). She is also interested in national pride, its sociodemographic and contextual determinants (2000), stability (Ferić and Burušić, 2004), and the association between the national pride and the openness to European integrations (Lamza Posavec, Ferić and Rihtar, 2006).

Political scientist **Andrija Henjak** has been writing on determinants of voters' ideological self-identification (2005), economic determinants of voting behaviour (2007, in English), party systems and voting behaviour in the Visegrad countries (Henjak and Tóka, 2007, in English), political cleavages and socioeconomic context (2010a, in English), the impact of welfare state upon political divisions in advanced industrial democracies (2010b, in English), electoral mobilisation and boundaries of party identification (2011), and the support for European integration (Gosselin and Henjak, 2011; Tóka, Henjak and Markowski, 2012; Henjak, Tóka and Sanders, 2012; all available in English). He also co-authored a chapter on Croatia (Henjak, Zakošek and Čular, 2013, in English) in the *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*.

Political scientist **Vlasta Ilišin** compared political attitudes of Croatian citizens with those of the political elite, particularly in terms of values (2008). In a series of works available in English she also analysed political attitudes of the Croatian youth focusing on both continuity and change (2002, 2007).

Political scientist **Dejan Jović** investigated the attitudes of the members of the first Croatian Parliament (1993).

Sociologist **Nenad Karajić** analysed opinions on democracy and participation in political decisions among Croatian citizens (1999).

Political scientist **Mirjana Kasapović** is best known for her research of electoral systems. Some of her works touch on the issues of political attitudes (1991, 2004, Kasapović, Šiber and Zakošek, 1998; Kasapović and Šiber, 2001, in English).

Law professor **Josip Kregar** is widely known for his research on corruption, yet, some of his works may also be appealing to readers interested in political attitudes and mentalities (Kregar, Magdalenić, Petković, Radin and Rimac, 1990; Petković, Rimac, Magdalenić, Kregar and Radin, 1990; Kregar, 2010, in English; Kregar, Sekulić and Šporer, 2010).

Yet another contributor to this volume, information scientist **Vesna Lamza Posavec** has been concerned with both methodological and substantive issues in the research of political attitudes. She investigated validation of pre-election polls with actual election results (1992), identification of "likely voters" in pre-election polls (1996), the problem of opinion withdrawal in research on voting intentions (Lamza Posavec and Rimac, 1997), key determinants of voting (2000; Lamza Posavec and Milas, 2000; Rihtar and Lamza Posavec, 2003), the application of telephone surveys in research on voting intentions (Lamza Posavec and Rimac, 2000), the applicability of Perry's model of "probable voters" for predicting election results (Lamza Posavec and Milas, 2002), abstention at parliamentary elections (2004), national pride (Lamza Posavec, Ferić and Rihtar, 2006), the influence of published pre-election poll results on the behaviour of voters at the elections (Lamza Posavec and Rihtar, 2007), the methodology of exit polls (Lamza Posavec and Bagić, 2008; Bagić and Lamza Posavec, 2008), and political relevance of relative deprivation (Rihtar and Lamza Posavec, 2008).

Psychologist **Goran Milas** investigated a wide range of issues of concern to researchers of political attitudes: the relationship between young people's social status and their political orientations (Buzov, Milas and Rimac, 1990), citizens' opinion on desirable characteristics of the president (1992), structural models of

the Croatian political scene (Rimac and Milas, 1994), ideological determinants of party preference and voting intentions (Milas and Rihtar, 1997), the structure of social attitudes (Milas and Rihtar, 1998), opinions about those in power as indicators of party preference and voting intentions (1998), the influence of exposure to television on the perception of political space (Rihtar, Milas and Burušić, 2000), inconsistencies in voting behaviour (2000), key motivational determinants of voting at presidential elections (Lamza Posavec and Milas, 2000), the applicability of Perry's model of "probable voters" for predicting election results (Lamza Posavec and Milas, 2002), ideological and socio-demographic profiles of Croatian voters (Milas and Burušić, 2004), determinants and motives for voting preferences (Milas, Rimac and Rihtar, 2004), agents of democratic development and satisfaction with democracy in European countries (Rimac and Milas, 2005, in English), as well as the correlation between basic personality traits and aspects of political behaviour (2007).

Sociologist **Stanko Rihtar** addressed a variety of topics related to political attitudes: reasons for voters' commitment (1992), ideological determinants of party preference and voting intentions (Milas and Rihtar, 1997), the structure of social attitudes (Milas and Rihtar, 1998), the influence of exposure to television on the perception of political space (Rihtar, Milas and Burušić, 2000), perceived morality and competence in the motivational structure of political preferences (Rihtar and Lamza Posavec, 2003), determinants and motives for voting preferences (Milas, Rimac and Rihtar, 2004), national pride (Lamza Posavec, Ferić and Rihtar, 2006), the influence of published pre-election poll results on the behaviour of voters at the elections (Lamza Posavec and Rihtar, 2007), political relevance of relative deprivation (Rihtar and Lamza Posavec, 2008), the role of moral emotions in voters' polarisation (Rihtar and Ferić, 2008), and the "Americanisation" of election campaigns (Balabanić, Mustapić and Rihtar, 2011).

Political psychologist **Ivan Rimac** also dealt with numerous issues of concern to those interested in political attitudes: measurements of rigidity (Kregar, Magdalenić, Petković, Radin and Rimac, 1990) and conservatism (Petković, Rimac, Magdalenić, Kregar and Radin, 1990), the relationship between young people's social status and their political orientations (Buzov, Milas and Rimac, 1990), the relationship between social status and voting behaviour (1992), structural models of the Croatian political scene (Rimac and Milas, 1994), the problem of opinion withdrawal in research on voting intentions (Lamza Posavec and Rimac, 1997), the structure of citizens' ideological commitment (1998), the application of telephone surveys in research on voting intentions (Lamza Posavec and Rimac, 2000), structuring of political problems and societal modernisation (2004), determinants and motives for voting preferences (Milas, Rimac and Rihtar, 2004), agents of democratic development and satisfaction with democracy in European countries (Rimac and Milas, 2005, in English). Rimac also wrote on political culture of citizens (1999), determinants of trust in the institutions of the Croatian political system (2000), the relationship between attitudes and following media (Mataušić and Rimac, 2000), socio-cultural, economic and political correlates of trust in the European Union (Rimac and Štulhofer, 2004, in English), values and attitudes of social sensitivity in European countries (Rimac and Zrinščak, 2010, in English).

The range of issues covered in the works of sociologist **Duško Sekulić** often overlaps with the topics of interest to researchers on political attitudes. For example, Sekulić wrote on political transformation and elite formation in Croatia (Sekulić and Šporer, 2002, in English), value determinants and social determinants in the evaluation of political leaders (Sekulić and Šporer, 2007), European and Croatian identity (Sekulić and Šporer, 2008, in English), corruption and trust (Kregar, Sekulić, Šporer, 2010), values

and social changes (2010), value-ideological orientations (2011), social context and the value system (2012a), and liberal values (2012b).

Political scientist **Ivan Šiber** covered a wide variety of topics related to political attitudes: political socialisation in the former Yugoslavia (1991) and in Croatia (1994a), perceptions of economic standard, democracy, social welfare and aspirations in the former Yugoslavia (1992a), the impact of nationalism, values and ideological orientations on multi-party elections in Croatia (1992b), strengthening of the right-wing political forces and social changes in Croatia and the former Yugoslavia (1993), Central and Eastern European political cultures in transition (1994b), war and changes in social distance toward ethnic minorities in Croatia (1997a), authoritarian personality, political worldview, and party preferences (1998), the relationship between contemporary political orientations and ideological conflicts during the Second World War (2003a), interest in elections and electoral participation (2004), political culture, authoritarianism and democratic transition in Croatia (2005). He also edited a volume on the 1990 and 1992/93 parliamentary elections in Croatia (1997b). All the works mentioned so far are available in English. Šiber also investigated the impact of ideological cleavages on political life (Kasapović, Šiber and Zakošek, 1998), electoral and political behaviour (2001, 2003b, 2007) and its association with social changes (2000, in English) and electoral policy (Kasapović and Šiber, 2001, in English), fears and hopes of the young people (Blanuša and Šiber, 2008, 2011), and opinion leaders (Šiber and Blanuša, 2011).

The primary research interest of the sociologist **Aleksandar Štulhofer** is the sociology of sexuality, yet some of his works also touch on the issues of political attitudes (Rimac and Štulhofer, 2004; Štulhofer, 2004, 2006; all in English).

Educational scientist **Vladimir Vujčić** wrote extensively on the importance of political culture for democratic development and devoted a whole book to this topic (2001). Vujčić investigated the values and tolerance of civil liberties (1996, in English), the concept of political culture (1997), dimensions of political culture (1998a), political culture and inter-ethnic relations (1998b), typology of political culture (1998c), political culture and political structure (1999a, 1999b), political culture and political support (1999c), party and ideological identities (1999d), political participation (2000a), human rights awareness (2000b), globalisation and the issue of political legitimation (2002), and the concept and practice of citizenship among Croatian youth (2003, in English, 2004a, 2004b, 2005).

Political scientist **Nenad Zakošek** writes on a variety of topics. Among the works related to political attitudes, one can point to his investigations of ideological cleavages in political life (Kasapović, Šiber and Zakošek, 1998) and structural foundations of party systems in Southeast Europe (2005, in English). Most recently, Zakošek co-authored a chapter on Croatia (Henjak, Zakošek and Čular, 2013, in English) in the *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*.

Finally, besides the series of theoretical essays on political attitudes and actors, presented in the last three issues of EQPAM, the author of this overview, sociologist **Armano Srblijinović** has co-authored a number of works in English, trying to explain formation of emotional beliefs (Srblijinović and Božić, forthcoming in 2014), the role of such beliefs in the emergence of extreme political attitudes, and the possibilities to prevent or mitigate the extremes (Čosić, Srblijinović, Popović, Kostović, Judaš and Vukšić, 2012), using findings from interdisciplinary research on human emotions.

3. Conclusion

We can conclude that the number of works compiled here, as well as the significance and diversity of topics covered by various authors indicate that a more thorough and systematic review of the research on political attitudes in Croatia would be worthwhile. Such an effort would entail better understanding of the formation and development of political attitudes, which would benefit not only academic researchers, but also political practitioners, and could contribute to a more reflexive, far-sighted, and effective political decision-making.

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